

NOTES FROM THE MEDICAL PRESS



IN CHARGE OF

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HYSTERIA.—*The New York Medical Journal*, in an abstract of an article in the *Lancet*, says: Savill, from a study of the disorder, concludes: 1. Hysteria consists of an instability or undue irritability of all the nervous and reflex centres throughout the body, and particularly those of the vasomotor and sympathetic systems. 2. Hysterical paralysis or tremor and many other hysterical phenomena are produced by vascular changes in the nervous system and elsewhere. 3. The essential defect in the nervous system upon which the hysteria depends is inborn and inherent—that is to say, the reflex centres in hysterical subjects are throughout life more unstable than those of other people. The general measures directed to the improvement of the nervous irritability may consist of rest, isolation from home surroundings, food, massage, electricity, hydrotherapy, and psychotherapy or hypnotism. Of all the various measures, rest is of the greatest value in allaying irritability of the nervous system. All sources of peripheral irritation must be removed. Complete rest of the body can be obtained only in bed. Abundance of sleep is essential, and it is sometimes justifiable to administer hypnotics. Removal from the conditions under which the disease arose is almost as indispensable as rest. It is often necessary not only to remove the patients from home, but to forbid any letters to be written or received. As much easily assimilable food as the patient can take improves the nutrition of the nervous system and of the body generally. To increase the power of assimilation, such increase in the amount of food should be associated with massage. Massage also soothes the nervous system. As a rule, no drugs should be given, except an occasional aperient or dose of bromide for sleeplessness. Electricity is of considerable use, especially in those cases where a rigid rest cure cannot be given. Static electricity is more useful than the galvanic or faradic forms. Hydrotherapy is not much used in England, but it undoubtedly acts powerfully on the neurovascular system. Under psychotherapy may be included all kinds of persuasion, suggestion (autosuggestion and heterosuggestion)

and hypnotism. The object is to cultivate the will and control of the patient over her unruly emotions and unstable reflex centres. Ammonium bromide is the writer's sheet anchor for allaying the irritability of the reflex centres. Apomorphine is the best remedy for the prompt cure of severe hysterical convulsions. The writer has also had a certain amount of success with vasoconstrictors (ergot), vasodilators (pilocarpine), and remedies acting on the blood (calcium salts) in cases where there is noticeable irregularity in the vasomotor regulator mechanism. Educational and other prophylactic measures are of great value.

DIET IN PULMONARY TUBERCULOSIS.—Dr. Theodore Senseman of Atlantic City read this paper at a meeting of the Medical Society of the State of New Jersey. He concluded that (1) it was not the amount of food ingested that counted, but the amount assimilated. (2) One should improve digestion and allow appetite to follow of its own accord. (3) There was a pivotal point in each patient's digestive ability which should be ascertained. (4) This pivotal point was capable of being raised. (5) All tuberculous individuals showed evidences of digestive derangement; it was folly to attempt to make them do more work when in this condition than when in a healthy state; therefore, stuffing patients with solid food was a mistake. (6) Diet which gave the greatest amount of nourishment and made least demand upon digestive organs was the diet of choice. Raw eggs and milk met these requirements. (7) Each patient had a normal weight beyond which one should not endeavor to force him. (8) This normal weight attained, the smallest quantity of food which would enable him to maintain it was sufficient. (9) So long as this normal weight could be maintained, the patient had nothing to fear from tuberculosis.

THE WIDAL REACTION.—The following is taken from the State Board Examination Questions of South Dakota, published in the *Medical Record*: The Widal serum reaction "depends upon the fact that serum from the blood of one ill with typhoid fever, mixed with a recent culture, will cause the typhoid bacilli to lose their motility and gather in groups, the whole called 'clumping.' Three drops of blood are taken from the well-washed aseptic finger tip or lobe of the ear, and each lies by itself on a sterile slide, passed through a flame and cooled just before use; this slide may be wrapped in cotton and transported for examination at the laboratory. Here one drop is mixed with a large drop of sterile water, to redissolve it. A drop from the summit of this

is then mixed with six drops of fresh broth culture of the bacillus (not over twenty-four hours old) on a sterile slide. From this a small drop of mingled culture and blood is placed in the middle of a sterile cover-glass, and this is inverted over a sterile hollow-ground slide and examined. . . . A positive reaction is obtained when all the bacilli present gather in one or two masses or clumps, and cease their rapid movement inside of twenty minutes." (From Thayer's *Pathology*.)

TREATMENT OF CONSTIPATION BY ABSTINENCE FROM MEAT.—*The Medical Record* says: Treatment of constipation by purgatives alone is not regarded with favor by the majority of practitioners, and even a diet which leaves a large amount of residue to act as a stimulant to the intestines does not give good results. Kohnstamm (*Zeitschrift für Physikalische und Diätetische Therapie*), depends chiefly on butter and milk, with the absolute exclusion of meat, to overcome chronic constipation. He begins treatment with a purgative and an enema, after which he waits four or five days for a natural stool. If this does not occur another enema is given, but under no circumstances another purgative. The patient is then put on a diet consisting of oatmeal, milk, bread and butter, honey, eggs, soups, vegetables, fruits, and cocoa. He reports several instances in which excellent results have been obtained, even in cases of ten years' standing. Other cases failed because the patient became lax and discontinued butter, or added meat to the dietary.

HEADACHE AND ITS PHYSICAL TREATMENT.—The same journal in an abstract of a paper in *Berliner Klinische Wochenschrift*, says: Riedel distinguishes several different forms of headache and suggests appropriate treatment for each. Hyperæmic headache, in which it is a matter of no importance whether the hyperæmia is of the substance of the brain or of its membranes, is treated by cold applications to the head and hot baths of the feet. Anæmic headache, usually due to general anæmia or chlorosis, calls for warm cloths on the head and hot compresses on the brow or on the nape of the neck. Rheumatic headache, which is in reality a myositis rheumatica, is to be treated by massage and warm applications. Neuralgic headache is to be treated in the same manner, but reflex headaches, which frequently counterfeit the neuralgic, are not benefited thereby, and can be relieved only by searching out and removing the cause of the reflex disturbance. In headaches due to neurasthenia hydropathy is of great service.

HOSPITAL ZONES.—*The Maryland Medical Journal* says: The Society for the Suppression of Unnecessary Noises has secured the passage by the New York city council of a very useful ordinance. It provides that signs shall be placed on the corners of all streets in which a hospital is situated. The signs read "Hospital Street," and the areas bounded by these signs are to be known as "hospital zones." Within these hospital zones hucksters must not cry their wares, street musicians must not perform, street cars must run slow and avoid unnecessary whistling or gonging, teamsters must walk their horses, newsboys must ply their trade in comparative silence, and children must not collect in numbers nor make a noise. A fine of \$10 is the penalty for disturbing these silent precincts with unnecessary noise. Health Commissioner Darlington and Police Commissioner Bingham are both said to be pleased with this ordinance, and will enforce it.

LOCAL USE OF MAGNESIUM SULPHATE IN INFLAMMATION.—*The Inter-State Medical Journal* contains the following: A saturated solution of epsom salts is applied on 15 to 20 thicknesses of ordinary gauze, which is kept moist by frequently pouring the liquid on the compress without removing it. This is kept up for 24 hours when the skin is washed after the compress is removed. The skin is markedly blanched and there is a partial loss of sensation, which persists for several hours. With these applications relief has been obtained in epididimitis, acute rheumatism, gonorrheal joints, sprained joints, and in facial erysipelas the local pain was abated in a few hours. The suggestion for the external use came through the known anesthetic quality of magnesium sulphate when used hypodermically.

PROCREATION OF SEXES AT WILL.—Thury, of Geneva, states in *The Gazette Médicale de Paris* that if sexual congress takes place four or five days before the appearance of the menses, provided that fecundation take place, the infant will be a girl. If impregnation should occur five or six days after the cessation of the menstrual flow, the infant will be a boy. He reports an experiment made upon cattle by a Swiss farmer, who in twenty-nine cases was successful in controlling the sex by adopting this method without one failure. Dr. Guiard reports a series of thirty-five observations in the human subject, in which thirty-one times the law of Thury verified.

IMPROVISED CRADLE.—*The American Journal of Surgery* says: A barrel cut in two on its long axis, makes an excellent holder for bed-clothes in acute affections of the lower extremities. Not only does it avoid the heavy pressure of the covering but it diminishes the chances of discomfort caused by jarring of the bed.

SUNSTROKE.—*The New York Medical Journal* says: Senftleben finds that sunstroke is due to a serious autointoxication of the organism which may prove fatal within a few hours in a superlatively healthy, strong, and young man.

MACROSCOPICAL AND MICROSCOPICAL.—*The Medical Brief* says: How often a physician or student sees in his journal the expressions "macroscopical" and "microscopical," and wonders at the difference in the meaning. To the wise the meaning is evident, but to those who cannot fathom the difference we wish to state that there is a wide distinction to be made. Macroscopical objects are easily discerned without a magnifying glass—seen with the naked eye—while microscopical objects need a microscope to discover them; they are minute lesions. In expert evidence the distinction will be evident and have weight.

RADIUM FOR CHRONIC RHEUMATISM.—*The New York Medical Journal* quoting from *Journal de Médecine de Bordeaux*, says: Robin presented to the Académie de médecine a communication by Dominici upon the action of radium in chronic rheumatism. The apparatus consisted of a metallic screen or shield covered with radium in the form of powder. It was stated that the radium exercised a remarkable effect—resolution of the swelling, disappearance of pain, disappearance of contracture, and the return of function.

DOCTORS AS COOKS.—A Berlin physician, Dr. Wilhelm Sternberg, is endeavoring to bring about the introduction of a course in cookery into the medical curriculum. He considers that doctors are in the habit of prescribing a diet for their patients with regard only to its chemical ingredients, forgetting the importance of an appetizing method of preparation.